

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 877

By Hensley

A RESOLUTION to urge the Tennessee Commission of Indian Affairs and the United States Bureau of Indian Affairs to take action regarding applications to be recognized as a Native American tribe filed by the Cherokee of Lawrence County.

WHEREAS, the Cherokee of Lawrence County, Tennessee, have no interest in a casino; and

WHEREAS, the tribe cannot open a casino without the express written consent of the state of Tennessee and the United States government; and

WHEREAS, the Cherokee of Lawrence County, Tennessee, have had an active petition for recognition on file with the state of Tennessee since July 31, 2000, with no action having been taken on such petition; and

WHEREAS, there are over one million disenfranchised Cherokee in the United States today, of which at least 200,000 are estimated to live in Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, recognition of the Cherokee of Lawrence County as a tribe will grant the Cherokee their rights as a minority; and

WHEREAS, the Cherokee of Lawrence County, Tennessee, are Cherokee, and descend from Cherokee who were in this area in the late 1700s, specifically the Steadman Ridge area; and

WHEREAS, the Cherokee of Lawrence County, Tennessee, are at the heart of the 1806 reservation set aside by the United States Congress for the Cherokee, and their ancestors were asked by the United States government to relocate to this area from the east; and

WHEREAS, the Cherokee were the first settlers of the Henryville area, with land grants given to Jacob Pennington, his family, and Cherokee friends; and

WHEREAS, Bell's route of "The Trail of Tears" passed through downtown Lawrenceburg, Tennessee, on November 6, 1838, causing all of the Cherokee in this area to go into hiding out of fear that the United States military would be soon rounding up the local Cherokee for removal, and resulting in common use of the racial term "Black Dutch" as a successful method of hiding their true race of Cherokee; and

WHEREAS, the Cherokee of Lawrence County, Tennessee, are organized as a 501(c)(3) non-profit educational organization and are registered with the state of Tennessee as a non-profit organization; and

WHEREAS, the Cherokee of Lawrence County, Tennessee, have an active signature petition for recognition that has been signed by over 23,000 people from all 50 states and from 23 foreign countries; and

WHEREAS, the Cherokee of Lawrence County, Tennessee, have a petition for recognition on file with the United States Bureau of Indian Affairs; and

WHEREAS, the Cherokee of Lawrence County, Tennessee, own and operate the Cherokee/David Crockett Museum and Cultural Center, which is open from Monday through Saturday and most holidays at no charge to the public, and which has had over 35,000 visitors in the first two years of operation; and

WHEREAS, the Cherokee of Lawrence County, Tennessee, own and operate Cherokee Camp, a free Boy and Girl Scout camp on 193 acres of wilderness, 365 days a year, and present each Scout with a Cherokee Camp Patch, the Story of the Cherokee Camp Patch, and the Lord's Prayer in Cherokee Phonics; and

WHEREAS, the tribal headquarters, Cherokee/David Crockett Museum and Cultural Center, and Cherokee Camp are the third largest tourist attraction in Lawrence County, Tennessee, with over 40,000 visitors, only surpassed by the David Crockett State Park and the Amish community; and

WHEREAS, the Cherokee of Lawrence County, Tennessee, furnish very valuable staff, office space, phone, display space, and utilities to the Lawrence County Department of Tourism at no charge; and

WHEREAS, the common practice of having an annual brush arbor service by rural churches throughout the South is an ancient Cherokee ceremony; and

WHEREAS, the commonly heard phrase "the old stomping ground" is a direct reference to the ancient Cherokee ceremony known as "stomp," which is a dance conducted in the sacred square that was "the stomping ground" on a regular basis; and

WHEREAS, the term "dog irons" commonly used in the South instead of the word andirons, which are the metal structures used in fire places to keep the logs from rolling, originated from an ancient Cherokee pipe ceremony, where the Creator is asked to "not let the two dogs roll the log" that one had to cross and not fall into the pit of fire; and

WHEREAS, the Cherokee of Lawrence County, Tennessee, have the most extensive Cherokee historical library in the South, which includes the John Howard Payne papers; and

WHEREAS, the Cherokee of Lawrence County, Tennessee, have distributed a great number of Cherokee books, printed historical data, and cassette Cherokee language study guides to the public; and

WHEREAS, the Cherokee of Lawrence County, Tennessee, maintain a shelter for displaced Cherokee that are able bodied in mind and spirit; and

WHEREAS, the Cherokee of Lawrence County, Tennessee, maintain a store house of food for needy Cherokee; and

WHEREAS, the Cherokee of Lawrence County, Tennessee, have five full-paid scholarships to medical schools for qualified Cherokee people through the organization Pastors for Peace located in New York City, which scholarships are valued at approximately 1.5 million dollars; and

WHEREAS, the Cherokee of Lawrence County, Tennessee, are in need of good paying jobs, health care, and education; and

WHEREAS, the Cherokee of Lawrence County, Tennessee, have a no tolerance policy on drug and alcohol abuse, spousal abuse and child abuse, and lying may result in instant banishment forever; and

WHEREAS, the Cherokee of Lawrence County, Tennessee, are actively teaching ancient Cherokee beliefs and practices to the federally recognized tribes of the eastern and

western bands of Cherokee, to three state-recognized Cherokee tribes, and to three unrecognized tribes; and

WHEREAS, the Cherokee of Lawrence County, Tennessee, internally print and distribute approximately 120,000 pages of Cherokee historical information annually; and

WHEREAS, the Cherokee of Lawrence County, Tennessee, distribute an additional approximately 100,000 pages of commercially printed Cherokee historical information; and

WHEREAS, the membership of the Cherokee of Lawrence County, Tennessee, have written and published three Cherokee historical novels and four major genealogical manuscripts; and

WHEREAS, the Cherokee of Lawrence County, Tennessee, have assisted many other organizations in documenting the many "Trails of Tears" in the state of Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, the Cherokee of Lawrence County, Tennessee, maintain a large vault in order to secure and protect valuable, irreplaceable artifacts; and

WHEREAS, Native Americans are socially and economically disadvantaged in the United States; and

WHEREAS, the Cherokee of Lawrence County, Tennessee, are in need of law enforcement protection due to the continued destruction of their camp, threats and personal attacks, shots fired from automatic weapons, and desecration of their ancestors' graves; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED FOURTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that the Tennessee Commission of Indian Affairs is urged to take action regarding the petition for recognition as a tribe submitted by the Cherokee of Lawrence County by no later than October 1, 2006.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the General Assembly respectfully urges the United States Bureau of Indian Affairs to take action regarding the petition for recognition as a tribe submitted by the Cherokee of Lawrence County in as expeditious a manner as possible.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an enrolled copy of this resolution be transmitted to the Tennessee Commission on Indian Affairs and the United States Bureau of Indian Affairs.